



July 8, 2004

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary  
c/o Natek Inc., Inc.  
236 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E.  
Suite 110  
Washington, D.C. 20002

Re: MB Docket No. 04-207

Dear Chairman Powell and Ms. Dortch:

We understand that Members of Congress have commissioned a report on the potential affects of requiring cable and satellite companies to implement a channel-by-channel, or "a la carte," packaging plan. A close examination of this policy leads to the conclusion that a la carte packaging and pricing of programming would drastically stifle media diversity in America.


Ethnic and minority populations in the U.S. are acutely underserved by television's current offerings. Many opinion leaders have called on media businesses to generate more channels to serve audiences of African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and other ethnic groups. While some progress is being made in this area, the imposition of an a la carte pricing model could bring make those efforts obsolete. Many networks that serve diverse, minority, and multilingual interests largely depend on packaged programming for consumers for survival. And many such channels that exist today will not be able to survive with the reduced subscriber base they will face under a la carte.

If cable and satellite companies sell channels a la carte, it would instantly erode potential advertising support, forcing networks to dramatically increase the per-subscriber fee they must charge. Ultimately, subscribers would find themselves paying about the same amount - and possibly more - for just a handful of channels, rather than having the hundreds from which to choose, as they do today.

Various populations rely on cable to provide a window into other cultures, communities, styles and viewpoints. The imposition of a la carte would drastically reduce, if not eliminate that opportunity entirely.

Those who support diversity in today's media marketplace recognize the important role that the current cable system plays in building and expanding cultural diversity in this country. As such, we urge the FCC to strongly consider the full ramifications of a la carte in their report to Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Palmer', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Douglas Palmer